All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

Post #3

Chapters 6-8

12/30/11

**Summary:** Chapters Six through Eight of this book begin with the Second Company returning to the front lines of battle with their new and inexperienced recruits. Heavy shell bombing from the French enemies lasts for a few days before the actual trench warfare battle begins. This battle is extremely bloody and gruesome as the new recruits are easily killed due to their lack of experience and as there is a continuing back and forth of gunfire. By the end only 32 of the original 150 men survive the skirmish. Afterwards, Paul learns that he has been granted 17 days of leave so he decides to go back to his hometown to visit his family. At home however, he finds that his mother is sick and food supply is low. He finds it hard to express his war experiences to his family in words and leaves his home feeling more depressed than ever. From there he goes to a German training camp where he feels sorry for the Russian prisoners there. He has trouble understanding the point of war when he is just like the Russian men. An internal struggle continues for Paul.

**Analysis:** Chapters Six through Eight are filled with depression and despair. The battle in Chapter Six is one that is even bloodier than the earlier conflict that the Second Company took part in and Paul’s innocence is all but gone. Even his trip back home leaves him feeling pessimistic and unmotivated to fight for the German side. Paul seems to be going through an intense inner conflict as he constantly questions the point of the war. He has no hope in the future because he believes that the war will haunt him long after it’s over. Personally, I’m beginning to understand what the experience of war can really do to a man. I had heard of the mental issues that war veterans face, specifically Vietnam War veterans, but I now understand that when a man goes through the brutal act of killing others and watching his friends be killed, it has a long lasting impact on them.

**Application**: One human characteristic that I’ve fund from this story that spans both time and culture is the inner conflict of man. Seldom is a person completely at peace with themselves, where they’ve been, where they are, and where they are going in life. Paul is a prime example of a man who is battling himself and the French in the Great War. This struggle also seems to continually wear down a human until they crack and reach the point of a breakdown. I’ve seen it in my own life as well as the lives of others and I strongly believe that it’s part of a characteristic that spans all time and culture. The struggle really seems to encompass all three objectives as it deals with an imbalance of the aspects of human nature, the confusion of a human’s role in life, and the constant push for understanding.